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The Indian Corn

By Ex-Gov. Richard J. Oglesby

The Indian Corn

Presented to

Lilitha Wilson Esq.





RICHARD J. OGLESBY

1893

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The Indian Corn

Impromptu Speech
of
Ex-Gov. Richard J. Oglesby

Made at the
Fellowship Club at Chicago,
September 9th, 1894, on
the occasion of the
Harvest Home
Festival



*Written from memory, by Volney
W. Foster, a member of the Club*

Printed for
Private Distribution
Chicago, 1912



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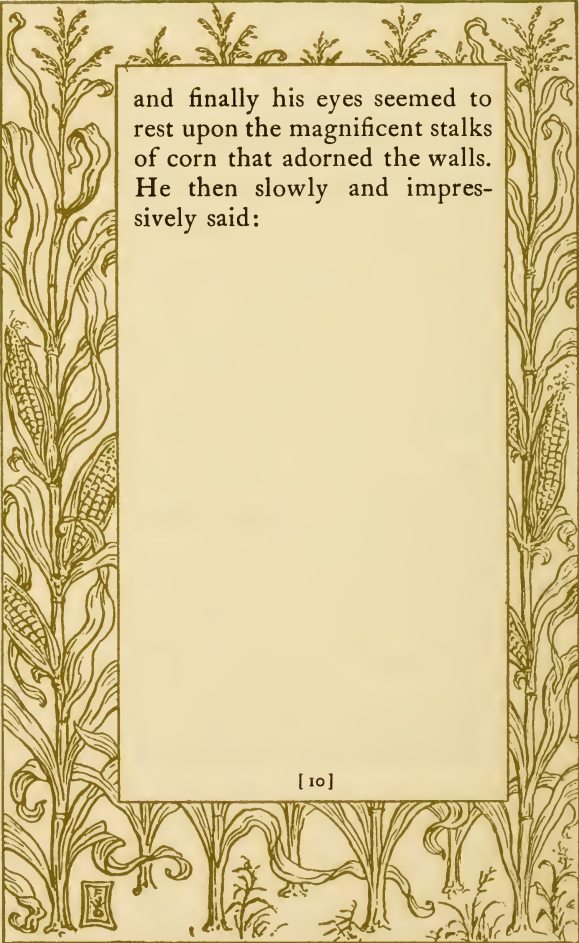
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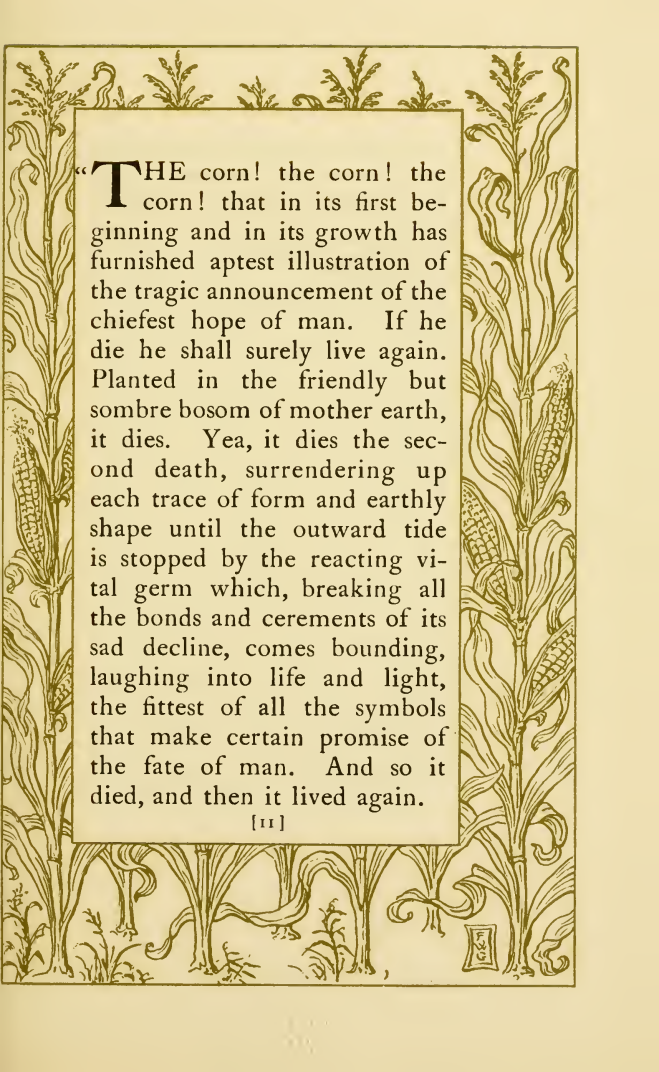
A decorative border of corn stalks and leaves surrounds the text. The stalks are vertical, with leaves and ears of corn. The leaves are long and pointed, some showing signs of being eaten. The ears of corn are visible on some stalks. The border is symmetrical on both sides of the text.

FOREWORD

AT a meeting of the Fellowship Club of Chicago, September 9th, 1894, the late Richard J. Oglesby, former Governor of Illinois, was a guest. He was called upon by the Toastmaster, Franklin H. Head, to respond to the toast, "What I know about Farming." Governor Oglesby sat at the speakers' table between the famous actor, Joseph Jefferson, and the well-known author, A. Conan Doyle, with whom he was in earnest conversation. The Governor arose slowly and was seemingly waiting for an inspiration. He looked deliberately upon the harvest decorations of the room



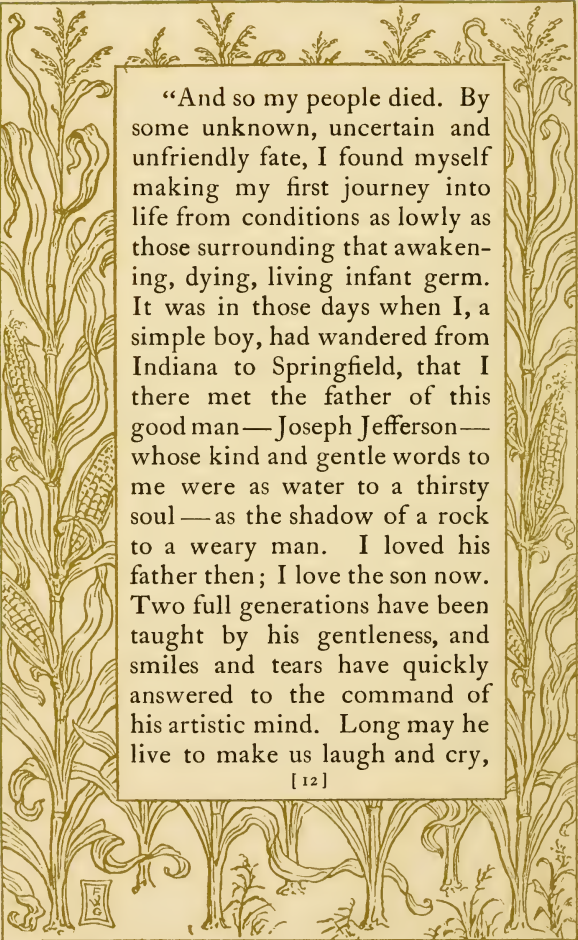
and finally his eyes seemed to
rest upon the magnificent stalks
of corn that adorned the walls.
He then slowly and impres-
sively said:



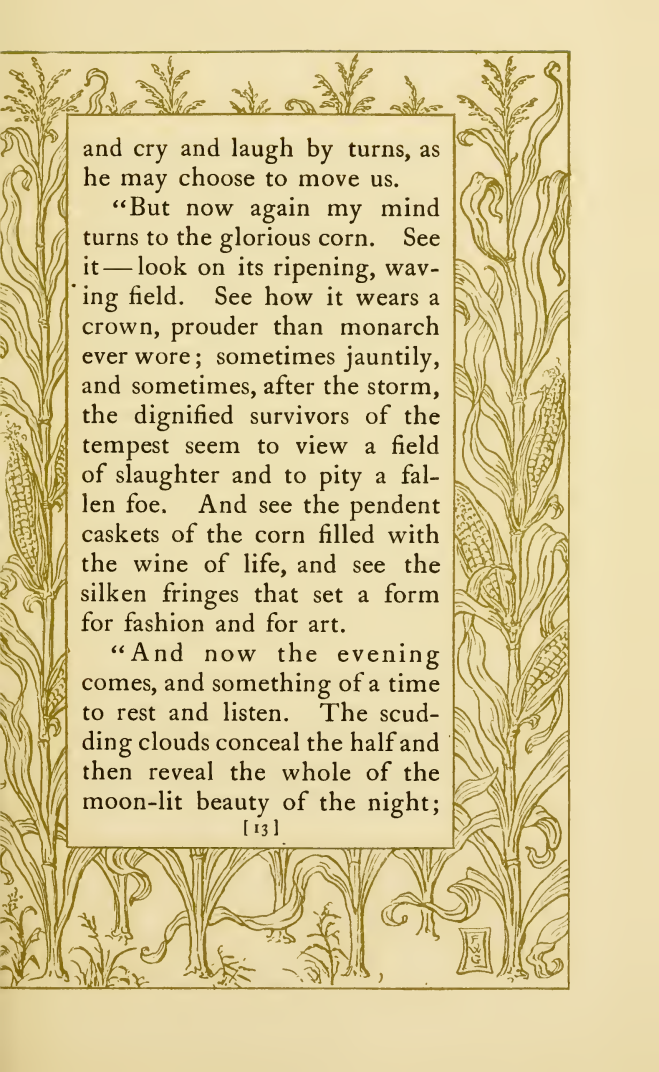
“THE corn! the corn! the corn! that in its first beginning and in its growth has furnished aptest illustration of the tragic announcement of the chiefest hope of man. If he die he shall surely live again. Planted in the friendly but sombre bosom of mother earth, it dies. Yea, it dies the second death, surrendering up each trace of form and earthly shape until the outward tide is stopped by the reacting vital germ which, breaking all the bonds and cerements of its sad decline, comes bounding, laughing into life and light, the fittest of all the symbols that make certain promise of the fate of man. And so it died, and then it lived again.

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A decorative border of corn stalks and leaves surrounds the text. The stalks are tall and slender, with large, pointed leaves. Several ears of corn are visible, some partially husked. The border is symmetrical and fills the top, sides, and bottom of the page.

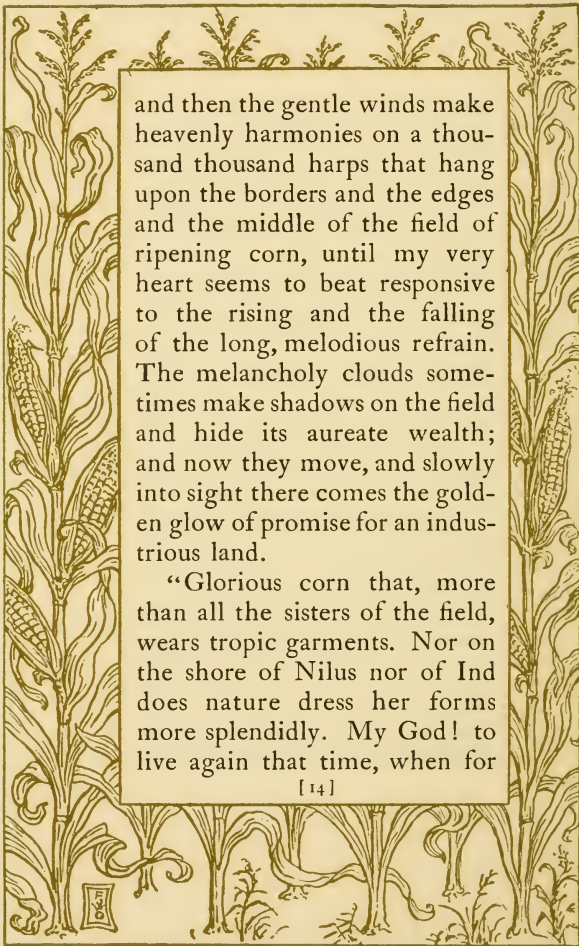
“And so my people died. By some unknown, uncertain and unfriendly fate, I found myself making my first journey into life from conditions as lowly as those surrounding that awakening, dying, living infant germ. It was in those days when I, a simple boy, had wandered from Indiana to Springfield, that I there met the father of this good man—Joseph Jefferson—whose kind and gentle words to me were as water to a thirsty soul—as the shadow of a rock to a weary man. I loved his father then; I love the son now. Two full generations have been taught by his gentleness, and smiles and tears have quickly answered to the command of his artistic mind. Long may he live to make us laugh and cry,



and cry and laugh by turns, as
he may choose to move us.

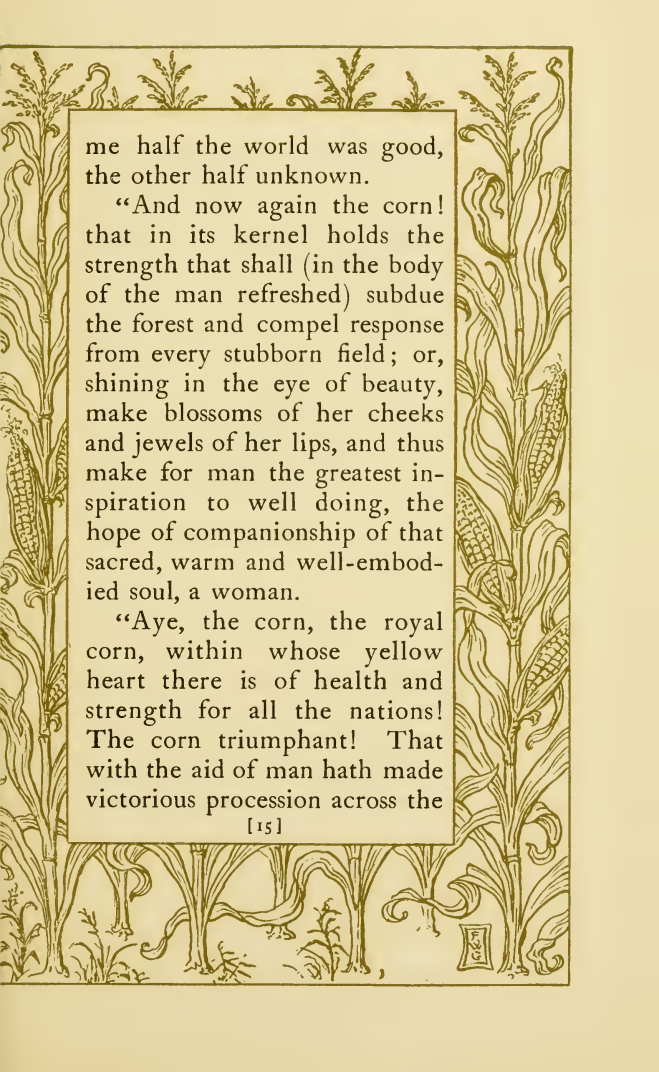
“But now again my mind
turns to the glorious corn. See
it—look on its ripening, wav-
ing field. See how it wears a
crown, prouder than monarch
ever wore; sometimes jauntily,
and sometimes, after the storm,
the dignified survivors of the
tempest seem to view a field
of slaughter and to pity a fal-
len foe. And see the pendent
caskets of the corn filled with
the wine of life, and see the
silken fringes that set a form
for fashion and for art.

“And now the evening
comes, and something of a time
to rest and listen. The scud-
ding clouds conceal the half and
then reveal the whole of the
moon-lit beauty of the night;

A decorative border of corn stalks and leaves surrounds the text. The stalks are tall and slender, with large, pointed leaves. Some stalks have ears of corn attached. The leaves are long and narrow, with prominent veins. The entire border is rendered in a simple, line-art style.

and then the gentle winds make heavenly harmonies on a thousand thousand harps that hang upon the borders and the edges and the middle of the field of ripening corn, until my very heart seems to beat responsive to the rising and the falling of the long, melodious refrain. The melancholy clouds sometimes make shadows on the field and hide its aureate wealth; and now they move, and slowly into sight there comes the golden glow of promise for an industrious land.

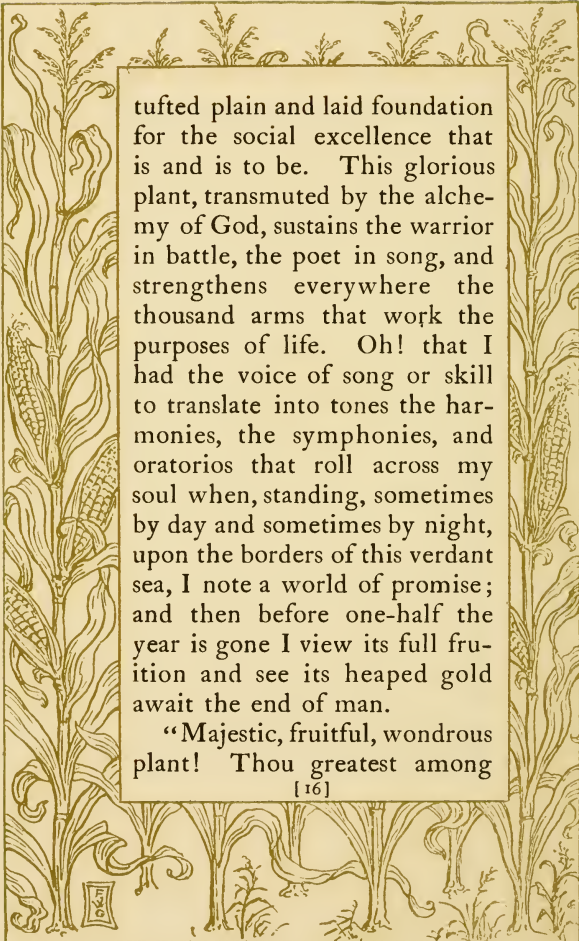
“Glorious corn that, more than all the sisters of the field, wears tropic garments. Nor on the shore of Nilus nor of Ind does nature dress her forms more splendidly. My God! to live again that time, when for



me half the world was good,
the other half unknown.

“And now again the corn!
that in its kernel holds the
strength that shall (in the body
of the man refreshed) subdue
the forest and compel response
from every stubborn field; or,
shining in the eye of beauty,
make blossoms of her cheeks
and jewels of her lips, and thus
make for man the greatest in-
spiration to well doing, the
hope of companionship of that
sacred, warm and well-embod-
ied soul, a woman.

“Aye, the corn, the royal
corn, within whose yellow
heart there is of health and
strength for all the nations!
The corn triumphant! That
with the aid of man hath made
victorious procession across the

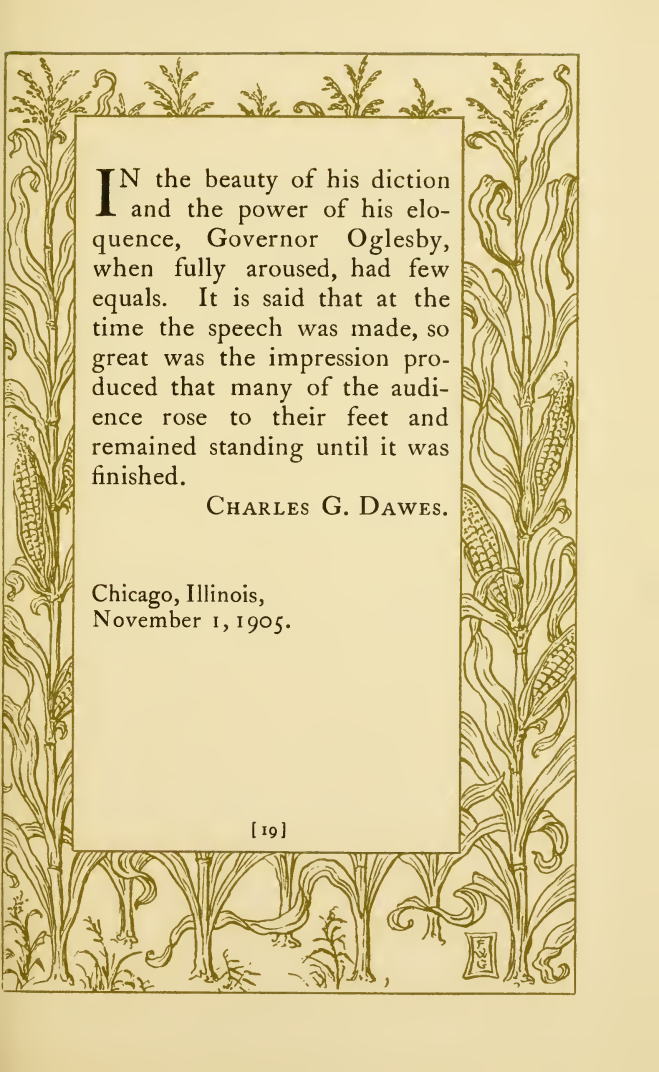
The page is framed by a decorative border of corn plants. On the left and right sides, tall stalks of corn with large, pointed leaves and developing ears of grain rise vertically. At the bottom of the page, there are smaller, more stylized representations of corn plants and stalks. The entire illustration is rendered in a simple, line-art style.

tufted plain and laid foundation
for the social excellence that
is and is to be. This glorious
plant, transmuted by the alche-
my of God, sustains the warrior
in battle, the poet in song, and
strengthens everywhere the
thousand arms that work the
purposes of life. Oh! that I
had the voice of song or skill
to translate into tones the har-
monies, the symphonies, and
oratorios that roll across my
soul when, standing, sometimes
by day and sometimes by night,
upon the borders of this verdant
sea, I note a world of promise;
and then before one-half the
year is gone I view its full fru-
ition and see its heaped gold
await the end of man.

“Majestic, fruitful, wondrous
plant! Thou greatest among

the manifestations of the wisdom and the love of God that may be seen in all the fields, or upon the hillsides, or in the valleys.”

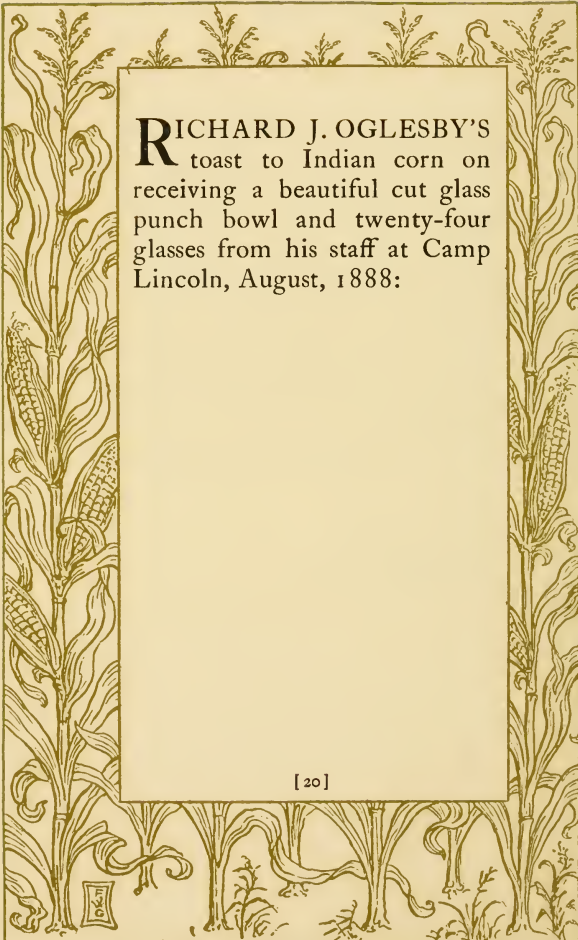




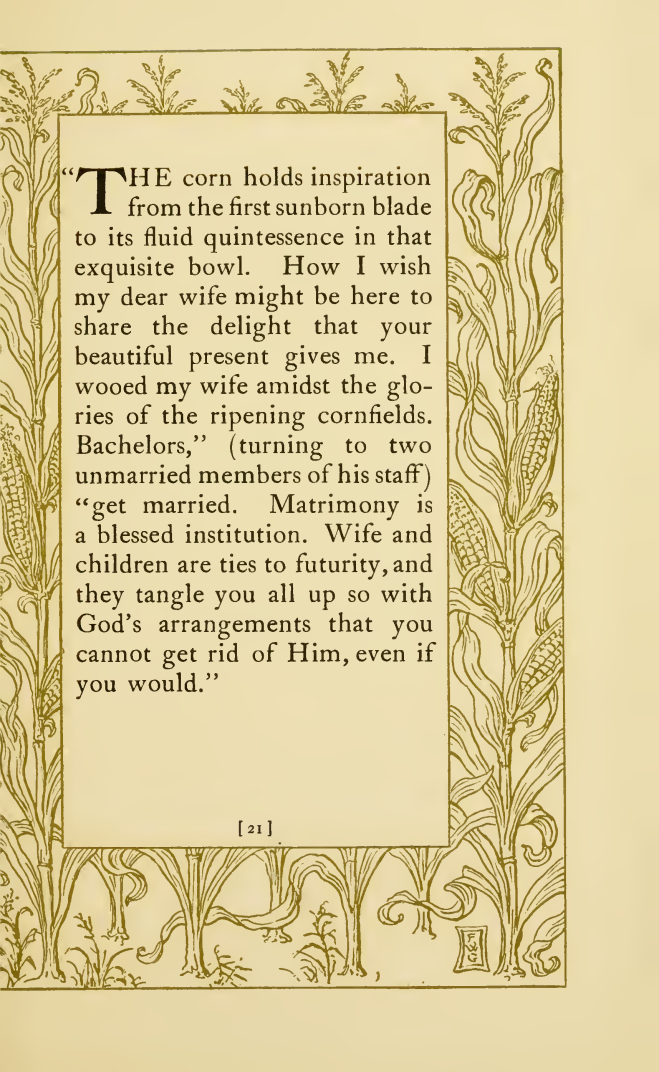
IN the beauty of his diction and the power of his eloquence, Governor Oglesby, when fully aroused, had few equals. It is said that at the time the speech was made, so great was the impression produced that many of the audience rose to their feet and remained standing until it was finished.

CHARLES G. DAWES.

Chicago, Illinois,
November 1, 1905.



RICHARD J. OGLESBY'S
toast to Indian corn on
receiving a beautiful cut glass
punch bowl and twenty-four
glasses from his staff at Camp
Lincoln, August, 1888:



“THE corn holds inspiration from the first sunborn blade to its fluid quintessence in that exquisite bowl. How I wish my dear wife might be here to share the delight that your beautiful present gives me. I wooed my wife amidst the glories of the ripening cornfields. Bachelors,” (turning to two unmarried members of his staff) “get married. Matrimony is a blessed institution. Wife and children are ties to futurity, and they tangle you all up so with God’s arrangements that you cannot get rid of Him, even if you would.”

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